Rose Hulman

TERRE HAUTE FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Newspaper Article Series

ROSIE THE ELEPHANT (Might use in conjunction with Rose Hulman's Football Homecoming Saturday, October 10)

Tomorrow afternoon Rosie The Elephant will once again lead the Rose Hulman football team out onto Phil Brown Field as the Engineers prepare to play Taylor University in their annual Homecoming Game. The lovable mascot has been part of the college for a long time.

There are conflicting reports on the elephant's origins, but it goes back to the days when Rose Polytechnic was located at 11th and Locust - the former site of Gerstmeyer High School - and where Chauncey Rose is today.

One story has it that a coveralls factory, across the street from the school, made overalls that had, as a logo, a red elephant on the back pocket. It became a fad for Rose students to wear these overalls and the elephant developed into the school symbol.

Another legend is that there was a large advertising sign near the football field that was cut out in the shape of an elephant. After winning big games it seems delighted students would pull down the sign and parade it around the field. Thus the elephant became Rose Poly's mascot.

The exact date of origin is not known, but is believed to be in the 1910's. Rosie, as the elephant was known, accompanied the school when it moved east of town in 1922.

Several mascots had been built in a hurry and did not last, but in 1929 a class was given the assignment of constructing a substantial Rosie. Wayne Dotson, a Terre Haute boy interested in cars, acquired an old Dodge and pulled it to campus and put boards across it. Another student, Herman Moench, drove it. A frame was built out to shape the elephant's body. That was covered with chicken wire netting. The boys got paper pulp from the local paper mills and stuck it on to make the skin. A trunk and head was fashioned and then the mascot was painted.

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By Jeff Adams

Legend has it that as a rivalry grew through the years between Indiana State Teachers College and Rose Poly, that Rosie was sometimes captured by those who were not friends; thus several Rosies were built.

By the 1930's Rose Poly had downtown parades during their homecoming and the elephant was always a part of that. One alleged good-time sport involving those driving Rosie was that of pulling the trolley rope on the streetcars, stalling them.

Today Rosie is represented by a student in an elephant suit. This idea was developed in the early 1970's when athletic director and basketball coach John Mutchner purchased a fluffy suit that had the tusks, big ears and head, and big stumps instead of hands or paws. It had to have a happy face to back the successful Rose teams.

The mascot leads the football teams to the field and the basketball teams to the floor, and helps the cheerleaders, and can usually be seen giving hugs to the alums on campus. It was never clearly decided if Rosie was of masculine or feminine gender. But it really doesn't matter. Rosie The Elephant is an integral part of Rose Hulman lore and will be out in full force to back the Engineers tomorrow during Homecoming "87.